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## Shadowbox: Talons Teeth Claws

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# SHADOWBOX: TALONS TEETH CLAWS

Erin Slaughter

The wolverine frog will break its own bones split open its skin to form claws & its  
body was meant for that, was made to,

so when people tell me we are destined for unraveling that a splayed heart breeds  
love's deep & only safety I refer

to the lion's mask of blood, the alligator with a ribbon of scales hung  
from its indifferent jaw

&

there is always a breaker & a broken the bloodlapping & the bloodspilt there is no  
careful dissection of sunlit desire

without a vulnerable party no alternating tooth for tooth or ruly gutting there is  
no gentle becoming of mutual bones only a carcass & the vulture who drags it  
from the street like no crime scene

ever huddled the asphalt begged for wings or lied down in surrender-palmed  
devotion to a gaze demanding to be fed

&

this house I built hoarded so many bees in the walls still every socket leaks honey

despite a fury of stingers poised to name any reaching hand prey

any pretty eye enemy quick & bluntly deadened before unreliable hunger is  
birthed such unfortunate hiveflood lust is, or worse than,

&

our bodies are made of walls, were meant for them, raw and stupid beneath the  
shell

the centipede cannibalizes its former skeleton to bulk larger, gulp power, stronger  
for carrying the shadow of that foolish husk inside it,

gnawing old skin in hopes the next hardening

will be impenetrable—a sloughing vein-deep beyond this

fallible bouquet of cells

ERIN SLAUGHTER editor and co-founder of literary journal *The Hunger*, and the author of *I Will Tell This Story to the Sun Until You Remember That You Are the Sun* (forthcoming from New Rivers Press in 2019). Her writing has appeared or is forthcoming in *The Rumpus*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Split Lip Magazine*, *New South*, *Passages North*, and elsewhere. Originally from north Texas, she is pursuing a PhD in Creative Writing at Florida State University. You can find her online at [erin-slaughter.com](http://erin-slaughter.com).